

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners,

As a citizen who wants to be informed about the political and electoral issues that affect my life, I am greatly disappointed by the lack of informative television programming.

Local public affairs programming is virtually non-existent--constituting less than one half of 1% of all local programming. More than half of news broadcasts prior to the 2002 elections did not include a single campaign story. Our democracy is at risk when many Americans don't know basic facts about the candidates or the issues, as was the case in the 2000 elections. Presently, I am aware of one U.S. Presidential debate airing tomorrow evening, which I plan to watch (9/30/04). I understand there will be two more. I hope they will be advertised enough to make me aware and watching. We have local elections which are also important here in Utah. Our PBS station KUED will be airing a debate between the Governors Candidates, but not until the evening before the election. I am not presently aware of any other station airing these and other pertinent debates, though I'm hopeful they are. Sometimes part of the important process is making the public aware of such programs and the times they are airing so we don't miss them.

Please devote a goodly share of your time to airing such valuable broadcasts for us voters. We need a substantial amount of pertinent information in order to be educated and wise voters.

Since broadcasters have clearly failed in their obligation to serve the public interest, the FCC should define meaningful public interest requirements that include local civic and electoral affairs programming. At a minimum, broadcasters should air three hours per week of local civic and electoral affairs programming, with at least two hours devoted to substantive election coverage in the six weeks prior to Election Day.

As the elections approach, a well-functioning democracy demands that citizens have access to a diversity of opinions and voices on the choices confronting us. Please see what you can do to help us in this voting process. Thank you.
Sincerely,

Anna Clare Shepherd

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